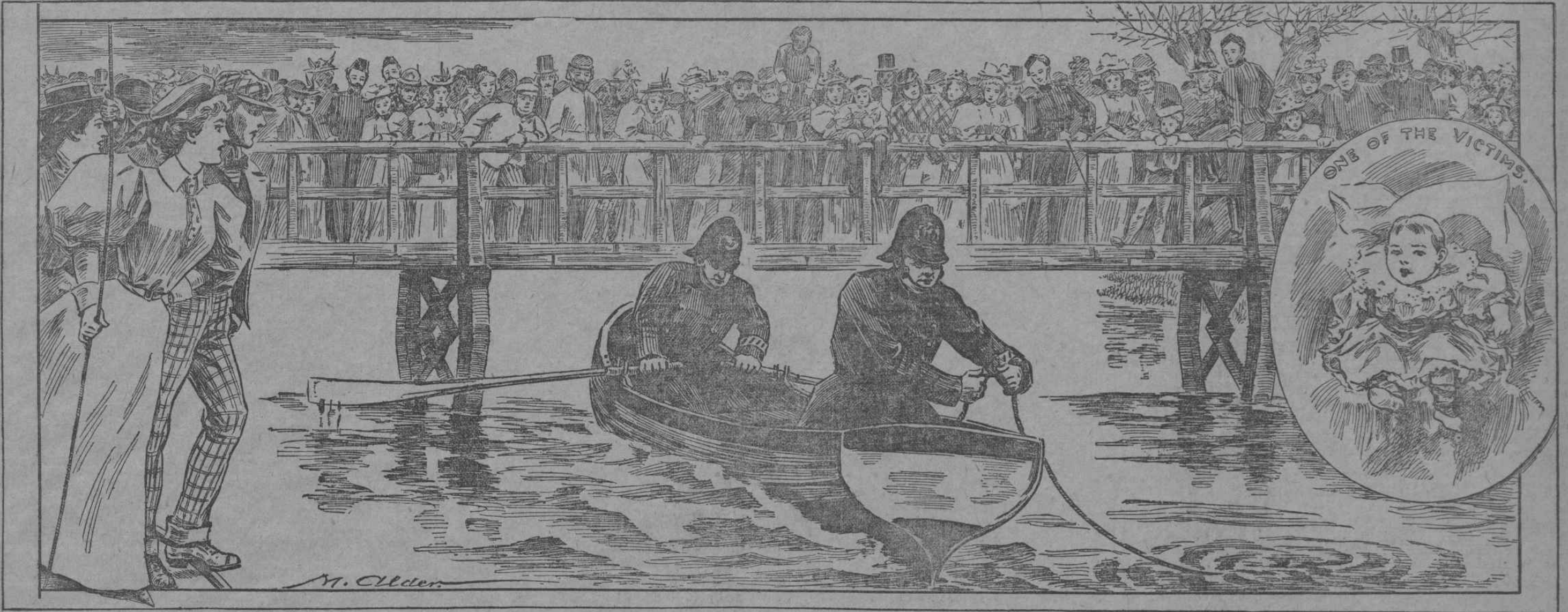


# THE MOST HEARTLESS WOMAN THAT EVER LIVED.



## WATCHING THE LONDON POLICE DRAGGING THE THAMES RIVER FOR THE BODIES OF THE POOR LITTLE VICTIMS.

London, April 26.—In one of the very prettiest reaches of the Thames—a place much sought by Americans on account of its beauty—the police are dragging the water for the bodies of the rest of the baby victims of the woman-fend Dyer, the murderous baby-farmer of Reading.

The gardeners reach to the water's edge, which reflects the masses of perfumed bloom upon the fruit trees that hang like great bouquets over shore and stream. Crowds follow the work of the constable as their boats move to and fro, and the gleaming teeth of their rakes drop incessantly into the water. Crowds stand on the footbridge beside the river, whence Dyer threw some of her tiny victims. Curiosity has brought all—even the police—to the scene, but all in this case (the police as well) are stirred by indignation and horror over the crimes that cause the work and the sight-seeing. Now and then a humorous soul calls to a constable, "What Luck, pardner?" and the constable cries back, "Not a bite," but far more often the ejaculations from the crowds are in the nature of curses upon the fiends who look baby lives at \$50 apiece as if they were destroying cabbage. Through the jests and curses, the sun shines, the birds carol and the glittering rakes dip unceasingly in the limpid waters.

I sent a reporter down there yesterday, and he has returned with a budget of news, easily obtained, and yet not published in the London or the local newspapers. The police, to be sure, display the utmost reticence upon the subject of their knowledge regarding the murders, whose rumored number has startled England. The only statement they made that seems to me worth reporting for America is that the case will prove to be the most serious of its kind of the century. They hinted vaguely at the near approach of sensational disclosures, and one of them said that he had not the least doubt that the murderers have been at their work for at least ten years, and in that period have made way with at least three hundred infants!

The reporter, while at Reading, gleaned from various sources the following facts concerning the nurse Dyer and her history: She is a stout, well-built woman, 5 feet 8 inches in height, about 50 years of age, and of very good address. She was dressed when arrested in the garb of a nurse.

She was convicted several years since of neglecting babies under her care, and when living at Bristol, two or three years ago, inquiries were made by the police respecting a child that had been in her care and that could not be located. Mrs. Dyer then threw herself into a canal in that city, but was rescued from suicide and confined as insane in the Gloucester Asylum. She was afterwards handed over to the Workhouse authorities at Barton Regis, where, at the Workhouse, she met with Mrs. Smith (the "Grannie" of this date) whom she persuaded to come and live with her. The old lady consented, and they took rooms in Bristol, later on moving to Cardiff, where they were joined by Mrs. Dyer's daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Palmer.

They then rented a large house and furnished it on the instalment system. Mrs. Dyer obtained several children, and when the rent became due they left and came to live at Elm Villas, Caversham, a suburb of Reading. The Palmers left—presumably separated from the Dyer woman and went to London, and just before last Christmas the woman and "Grannie" took the house in Kensington Road.

Palmer is Mrs. Dyer's son-in-law, and it is believed that it will be made to appear that he assisted her in her nefarious work and received the premiums paid for the care of the children, in several instances. He is under the middle age, 5 feet 10 inches in height, of slender build, and when arrested was stylishly dressed in a frock coat and faultlessly fashioned trousers, as well as a silk hat and a shepherd's plaid necktie. He has auburn hair and a light moustache. He is feeling his position very acutely and has grown very haggard.

If it be proven that the "commission business" in which he has been engaged was the receiving of the moneys paid by mothers who, for various reasons, desired to part with their little ones, it will be found that he never took less than \$50 at a time—or 410 English money—for in all her career that was the figure at which Mrs. Dyer rated her services. For many years she has been advertising in the London and provincial papers as willing to adopt infants on those terms. She never took a child or evinced any interest in a customer unless until the cash was paid down. Her advertisements were all of the conventional type, all too numerous even now, in the midst of this excitement, in the lower class London dailies and weeklies. Her mode of advertising was as follows:

"ADOPTION—Lady having no child wishes to adopt infant; premium £10; loving home."

But she was not of that band of baby destroyers who go to the pains to pretend that they need a child in order to secure an estate, and who say: "Baby wanted; must be from birth; would wait."

The house in Reading at which Mrs. Dyer was arrested is shown in an accompanying photograph, especially taken for the Journal by a photographer whose suggestive address is "Body Road, Reading." The house consists of six rooms—three bedrooms, a parlor, a kitchen and a scullery. It forms one of a long row of similar dwellings, and is neatly and comfortably furnished. Inquiries among the neighbors elicited the fact that Mrs. Dyer appeared to them to be a quiet and respectable woman.

The story of the manner in which the present case was developed against her has been but scantily dealt with in the cable reports.

On Monday, March 30, a parcel was found in the river, and when opened it was seen to contain the body of a female child. In address on the parcel led to the arrest of Mrs. Dyer, and the police are able to prove that she borrowed some string and took

### The Police Photograph of Mrs. Dyer.



out with her a paper parcel on that day; also that the string around the parcel was identical with the string she borrowed.

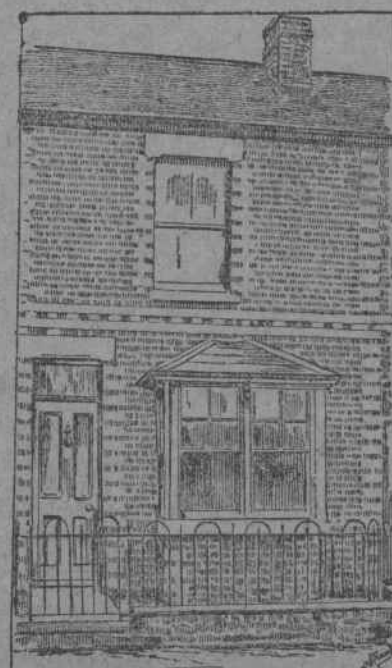
On Wednesday, April 8, a man who was dragging the river brought up a parcel of linen rags. When the parcel reached the surface of the water a brick dropped out, and also the head of a child, which floated upon the surface of the river. On examination of the parcel it was found that some tape had been tied tightly round the neck of the deceased child.

On Friday, the 10th, a third body was recovered, near the footbridge at the Clappers. It proved to be that of a child, and was wrapped up in a cloth and tied round with a string. There was a large brick in the parcel. The body was that of a child of about nine months of age. It is supposed that the little baby was suffocated by having something placed in its mouth. It is impossible to say how long the body had been in the water.

On the same afternoon another parcel was brought up from the centre of the footbridge. In this were found the bodies of two infants, accompanied by such other paraphernalia as warranted a strong suspicion that the murderer of the children previously found was also the destroyer of the lives of these.

With regard to these accessories, the tape used to strangle the babies, the brick invariably found in each parcel and those other implements which serve the police as bases for the case they will bring against Mrs. Dyer, it is important to say that apparently all her victims were treated in the same way. I am assured that the rumors that several bodies of babies found drowned in the Thames in or around London will be traced to Mrs. Dyer are incorrect. In every case she appears to have weighted the parcels with bricks, so that they sank immediately, and the bodies found near London are not known to have been treated in this way in any single instance.

To proceed with the case that has been worked up against Mrs. Dyer: She left her home on last Monday, saying that she was going to London. She took a carpet bag with her. Instead of buying a ticket for London, she went to Cheltenham and procured Miss Marmon's baby. Then she came up to London and arrived at her daughter's house at Willesden late at night. The next morning she met Mrs. Sergeant at Paddington, and obtained the Earing infant, which, there seems little doubt, was



Where the Babies Were Killed.

murdered on the same day. At the station Mrs. Dyer represented Mrs. Palmer as her niece, and they took the child back with them to Willesden, where, it is believed, it was strangled.

Mrs. Dyer slept that night in the house of her son-in-law, in the same room with the bodies of that day's two victims.

On the morning of the second day afterward, Thursday, the Palmers, husband and wife, helped the old woman to carry the carpetbag away from their house. It was then heavily weighted with the bodies of the two babies, but it is for the police to prove their assertion that the husband and wife knew the nature of its contents. They escorted Mrs. Dyer to the railway station, and saw her upon the train back to Reading.

She arrived late at night, and before going home went out of her way to cross the Clappers' Bridge. It is presumed that she then threw the bag into the water. On the next day, Good Friday, she was arrested on suspicion of having murdered the first child that had been found. Since then the four other bodies have been discovered, and the police are continuing to drag the river in the firm belief that they will find several more.

The first body found could not have been in the water many hours, for the river at the spot where it had been thrown in was shallow and muddy; indeed, there was scarcely enough water to cover the parcel, and the top was plainly visible and quite dry. On the inside of the wrapper was found the address "45, Kensington road, Reading." Had the parcel been immersed in the water for a long time the ink would have become obliterated. This child had been dead quite ten days, and it is believed that it had been kept in Mrs. Dyer's house all the while. When inquiries were made by the police on the day of the discovery of the body, it was found she had gone away. On the next day, that of her arrest, a woman called and made arrangements to bring a baby there on the following Monday and to pay a premium of \$500. After she had gone Mrs. Dyer said to "Grannie"—old Mrs. Smith—"What a godsend that money will be!" She meant by that that the money was needed to defray the cost of moving, for she was about to take a house at Bridgewater the following week.

In conversation with "Grannie," who is an amiable, chatty

### The Confessed Murderer of 300 Children.

old woman of about seventy, the reporter learned that Mrs. Palmer had been brought up in great fear of her mother, and believed that she was only an adopted daughter. Mrs. Dyer once attempted to kill her, rushing at her with a knife. "Grannie" had had many words with the woman on account of her neglect of and violence with the children left in her care, and the garrulous old creature says that since Mrs. Dyer has been in custody a baby now at the house, the child of a servant in London, has increased greatly in weight and is considerably better owing to "Grannie's" looking after her. There is a "cartload" of babies' clothing of all descriptions in pawn in Reading and various parts of the country, in addition to the hundreds of pounds of infants' clothing found in the Dyer cottage.

You have heard by cable how Mrs. Dyer made a second attempt at suicide, after her arrest again, as she did when she was arrested in Bristol. The cable has also informed you that this second time she tried to deal herself the same death by strangulation which was meted out to so many little babies—her victims, if the police are correct. She is said to have tied her shoestrings around her neck in the same way as the tape was tied around the necks of the babies, with the same knot and under her left ear, as was the case with the babies.

The funerals of the babies attracted enormous crowds, and fed the great excitement of the populace in Reading. This has largely quieted down, but crowds still watch the police, crowds still assemble about the Clappers' Weir and Caversham Lock, and the footbridge over which the murderer of the babies found in the weir must have walked with her guilty burden. Caversham Lock, of which we give a view, is adjacent to the Clappers, and is a pretty bit of country, though it is only a quarter of a mile from the town's smoke and bustle. Henley, famous for its annual regatta, is but twenty miles further up the Thames, and charming Clevedon, William Waldorf Astor's palatial country seat, is less than six miles from the scene of the crimes.

Before Mrs. Dyer made her written confession to the police the latter had perfected a case against her which was regarded as certain to secure conviction. The police will not yet reveal the details of the confession nor whether it implicates Palmer, the son-in-law. The evidence produced in the police court on the first case selected by the prosecuting attorney was overwhelming.

Mrs. Dyer had been indicted for the murder of Doris, the two-months old child of Miss Evelyn Marmon, of Cheltenham. It was the strangled body of her baby which the police found in the Thames that gave the clue to the identity of its murderers. The body had been wrapped in brown paper, and this bore the address of the Dyer woman.

Only nine days after she surrendered Doris to Mrs. Dyer, Miss Marmon was fetched by the police to Reading, and there in the morgue saw and identified the body as that of her child, whom she had given to Mrs. Dyer to be adopted and "brought up in a good home." Miss Marmon testified that she saw in a Bristol paper an advertisement of Mrs. Dyer for a baby for adoption and that she answered it. Mrs. Dyer replied, under the name of Harding, saying:

"I should be glad to have a dear little baby girl—one I could bring up and call my own. First I must tell you we are plain, homely people, in fairly good circumstances. \* \* \* Myself and husband are dearly fond of children. I have no child of my own. A child with me will have a good home and a mother's love and care. I should not mind the mother or any other person coming to see the child at any time. I only hope we may come to terms. I can give you good references."

The second letter of Mrs. Dyer, in which she named the price for taking the baby, was as follows:

"45 Kensington road, Oxford road, Reading. Tuesday, March 24, 1896."

"My dear Madam: You letter just to hand, and I shall be only too pleased for yourself, or any friends, to come to see us sometimes. We don't have many visitors out here in the country. I assure you it would be as great a treat to us as the change would be. I shall really feel more comfortable to know the dear little soul had someone that really cared for her. I shall value her all the more. Rest assured, I promise you faithfully, I will do a mother's duty by her, and I will bring her up entirely just the same as my own child. Every care will be taken of her, and when you come, you will soon see I do my duty. Dear child, I shall only be too glad to have her, and I will take her entirely for the sum of £10. She shall be no further expense to her family. I will come on Monday next. If I shall I will let you know later on what time train. I have not a time table, but I will find out and let you know. I am, yours faithfully, A. HARDING."

A meeting was finally arranged, and Mrs. Dyer came to Cheltenham to bring the baby away. Miss Marmon paid her the money, and the following paper was drawn up between them:

"I, Annie Harding, of No. 45 Kensington road, Reading, in consideration of the sum of £10 paid to me by Evelyn Edith Marmon, do hereby agree to adopt Doris, the child of the said Evelyn Edith Marmon, and to bring up the said child as my own child, without any further compensation over and above the aforementioned sum of £10. As witness hereunto we have this day, the 31st day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-six, subscribed our names, Annie Harding, Evelyn Edith Marmon, in the presence of Martha Dastnell, widow, of No. 23 Manchester street, Cheltenham."

Standing up in the witness box of the court Miss Marmon, with a dramatic gesture, pointed a threatening finger at the towering prisoner, and said: "That is the woman who took my child away." She also identified the inseparable carpet bag which it seems Mrs. Dyer took with her when making such journeys about the country.

JULIAN RALPH.